

The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.

A

SERMON

PREACHED

IN GRANVILLE STREET CHAPEL, HALIFAX, N. S.

MARCH 12, 1837.

ON THE OCCASION OF THE DECEASE OF

MISS ELIZA L. TREMAIN,

A MEMBER

OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH WORSHIPPING IN THAT PLACE.

BY E. A. CRAWLEY, A. M.

When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee.

HALIFAX:

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THE following discourse was originally prepared from brief notes and the writer's memory, for the private satisfaction of some of the relatives of the beloved and highly esteemed individual whose lamented but happy death called for this tribute.

It is believed to be substantially the same as was delivered on the occasion alluded to; and in submitting to the public eye, at the instance of those friends, this slight testimonial of departed worth, it is consoling to remember, that the excellence of christian character which is here recorded must stamp this production with a value above any intrinsic merit of its own. May these few pages have the blessed effect of leading some to a more diligent pursuit of a heavenly inheritance!

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S E R M O N.

PSALM CXVI. 15.

PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD IS THE DEATH OF HIS
SAINTS.

MANKIND do not generally prize very highly the memory of the dead. They are, for the most part, too speedily forgotten. Among all nations, indeed, there are found some sacrifices to the propriety of paying them a degree of external regard. From necessity, if from no higher motive, they appropriate to the dead a separate dwelling place, and may occasionally adorn it with memorials more or less costly : here and there an elegant monument, or splendid mausoleum may arise : but all this too frequently appears like a tribute extorted by mere custom, or designed to satisfy the general conviction of propriety, rather than the natural flow of a deep well-spring of feeling. The dead alas ! are soon forgotten : their graves are trodden with an almost cold hearted disregard of all that was wise, or excellent, or lovely. There are, we are happy to know, exceptions to this general observation : there are found bosoms in which the memory of those once beloved is embalmed with a holy recollection which time hardly can waste. But we now speak of the more common character of human feeling : it is but too plain that if our future happiness should depend on the endeared recollection of those who shall come after us, our prospect would be dark indeed.

But here, as in so many other instances, the divine remedy of the Gospel enters with a kind relief. There, is revealed to us an immortal recollection in which nothing is forgotten—an infinite mind in which all that God has been pleased to approve and love is stored up never to decay—a memory that blooms and flourishes in unfading youth, forming a glorious and blissful contrast with the cold indifference or human forgetfulness. And this, brethren, is our solace : it is the sweet truth which our text inculcates. “ Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

The application of this passage in the context may perhaps only regard a *temporal* deliverance. The Psalmist, sorely pressed by his enemies, or bowed with the weight of a threatening disease, is restored by the mercy of his God ; whom, in the words before us, he seems to represent as regarding the death of his servants as a thing too precious to be hastily thrown away at the bidding of every enemy, or to glut the voracious appetite of the common destroyer. But, while he thus refers to a temporal mercy, he inculcates a truth, which obviously, has a higher and more glorious reference to a state of eternal existence. If, death—the death of his saints is, in the sight of God, precious in its relation to the fleeting scenes of time ; far more precious must it be regarded in its relation to the scenes of Everlasting life.

It is in its relation to a future world that we desire to contemplate the sentiment of our text on the present occasion. God does not forget or disregard his people : he prizes their life ; and more highly prizes their death. We see them wasted by disease ; deserted, perhaps, by others ; suffering the common painful lot ; and to an unbelieving eye they may appear forgotten of their Maker : it is not so ; it is far otherwise. But the Lord judges not as men judge : glancing across all intervening scenes, He fastens his especial regard on those moments from which mankind spontaneously shrink ; and overlooking the seasons which to our carnal understandings may appear more attractive—more worthy of His regard ; He chooses just that period which to

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human wisdom seems most untoward ; and amidst the wreck of our mortal being, and the anguish of expiring nature, on this period, it is, that he stamps in His word the broadest signature of Heaven—"precious in the sight of the Lord is *the death* of his saints."

Having thus stated what we think to be the general sentiment of our text, we proceed to offer a few thoughts which may tend to illustrate and enforce it : and first, we ask ; Is further proof of this truth required ? We answer, that our text distinctly states the fact ; and that this text is not solitary. Amidst a multitude of passages that might be collected of the same import we remember it is said, "He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence : and precious shall their blood be in his sight : " And when the beloved disciple John was favoured with those glorious visions which are contained in the Book of Revelation, as if to impress in a peculiarly solemn manner, the same precious truth, he heard a voice from heaven saying unto him, "Write, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours : and their works do follow them." But in addition to the *direct* testimony of scripture, we would turn your attention, my brethren, to the consideration of *the general tenor of God's word* ; and of all we learn from thence, as well as from actual experience, of his conduct towards mankind. Does not all this tend to shew that he highly prizes the death of his saints ? Is it not all adapted to change their natural estimate of things, and habitually direct their attention to the day of their death as the object of their permanent regard—as far more important even than their life ? We find little said in the Bible about living for this life's sake—no support given to the corrupt notion that good living consists in the enjoyment of mortal life, or the indulgence of earthly appetites : we learn, indeed, how to live well, in the higher and better sense, and this for the purpose of teaching us how to die. Did God, in his mercy, reveal to his servant Adam the blessed hope of a divine Redeemer ? It was for the purpose of shewing how his Almighty power should be exhibited in turning that

death which was a part of the curse of sin, into the means of our highest blessing : the death of Christ was to prove our life : it was to transform death, our condemnation, into the precious means of our entrance on life Eternal.

And when the sins of men had multiplied on the earth, and it pleased the Almighty, in the fierceness of his wrath, to sweep away the millions, perhaps, of an unnumbered population with a desolating flood—preserving on its surface only eight persons—righteous Noah and his family—snatched from the wide spreading destruction—was not the same lesson still taught? The awfulness of death so terribly multiplied around bid them with peculiar energy remember their own death, from which they were now preserved by the same waters which brought it nigh to the whole human race besides, in order that they might the better prepare for it as the blessed period of their entrance to glory.

Were the Israelites rescued from Egypt by the right hand of God, passing safely through the floods that overwhelmed their enemies? Were they led about in the wilderness and miraculously feed? Were they bid to look forward to the fair land of promise as their future happy abode? In all these things the *temporal* comfort or deliverance of His people was comparatively a small part of Jehovah's design: the grand purpose was to produce in them a holy solemnity of mind which should lead them habitually to regard these things as pointing to that solemn day which should complete their rescue from sin; extricate them from a worse wilderness; and admit them, if faithful to God, into a far happier Canaan. The whole system of propitiatory offerings as instituted by Divine appointment was directed to the same great end. Daily as the bleeding sacrifices were laid upon the altar they taught the worshippers of the Almighty to think of their great antitype, that blessed "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," and who, by his own death was to surround that period, otherwise so mournful with a halo of light and glory—to transform him who has gene-

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rally been regarded as the King of Terrors into the Christian's sincerest and best friend, for precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his Saints. In a word, the whole system of Divine mercy works together to the same end. For this the word of God instructs by its precepts and its promises, its Divine consolations, and its glorious hopes, for they all reach away from the present life, and stretch towards death and a future state.—For this Christ died, and rose again, and ascended to heaven, drawing the hearts of his people after him in the solemn acts that marked his departure from the lower world.—For this the Spirit enters the soul and sanctifies the heart, sweetly persuading the Christian not to set his affections on the things that are on the earth but on the things above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and to the complete enjoyment of which death is the appointed entrance. This, then, is the grand object of the Bible; the paramount design of the Almighty, compared with which all other things are mean indeed. Kingdoms may rise and fall; nations may be agitated with affairs of the most thrilling interest; the hearts of the sons of men be wrapped up in their own worldly or idle speculations regardless of the final event which befalls them all. In the midst of the turmoil and confusion of the scene, the approving eye of God is fastened on but one object with all the fixedness and intensity of an infinite purpose: He follows the humble believer through all the intricacies and agitations of life; weans him daily from the world, and sets his heart upon future scenes; estimates other things only as they bear on this; and finally, when in various ways of deliverance and mercy he had shown forth his power and his love, he receives his servant as he falls exhausted in his last struggle and pronounces his death more precious than his life. “The day of death is better than the day of one’s birth.” “precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”

As the Lord has thus manifested an especial regard to the death of his people in the whole structure of his word and the uniform tenor of his dealings, so has he written the same in *the feelings of his servants themselves*. A mighty revolution has

passed upon them in this respect ; they are no longer what they were. Once death was a gloomy theme ; they dared not regard it with a steady gaze. Like the men of the world generally, they were absorbed in the cares, or the vanities of time : but the power of the Lord has rested upon them and taught them to look habitually upwards and onwards ; in this, as in other things he has impressed upon them his own image. Instead of shrinking from the contemplation of death, no event of their being engrosses so much of their thoughts—or, if this seem rather too much to affirm, certainly we must say that none is so habitually thought of as deserving their highest regard. Like others they must attend with diligence to the affairs of life—nay, in these they must be exemplary as well as diligent—but this they will do, as those who see a new relation in all things here below to the things above ; this they will do with a continual reference to that solemn hour, which, while it rises darkling and gloomy to others, in their view approaches as light from heaven.

Since God thus highly values the death of his people, it is natural to suppose that this truth would often be manifested in the happy feelings with which that day would be met : and though this may not always be the case, it is by no means unusual. Light from above has not only fallen upon the subject in God's word, but peculiar emotions often give evidence of the preciousness of that moment in which the saint of God breathes out his soul into the bosom of his Saviour. There is often at such times a holy solemn calm—a confident resting on the promises of God in Christ—a joyful, nay, even a triumphant hope that peculiarly mark that hour, as no other period of life was marked, giving proof at once of God's high regard for this moment, and of the response which his people render in their feelings.

And why should it not be so ? Is there not abundant reason for it ? Let us enquire what is death to the Christian ? We answer, *it is the end of sorrows*. Many are the sorrows of the righteous but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. In the course of his life He sustained and strengthened him under

afflictions, but in the hour of death He comes to appoint him an everlasting abode in that world into which sin and sorrow never can enter. Do you ask, again, what is death to the Christian? We reply, *it is the consummation of his joys*. On earth he has obtained an earnest of his heavenly inheritance: he has so tasted of Divine joys as to whet and increase his appetite—his holy desire for those pure enjoyments upon which he is now about to enter, without the interposing hindrances and disappointments which too often happen to him here. What is his death? *It is the fulfilment of the great purpose of his being*. Restored to God's image, his mind has in a humble measure harmonized with the mind of His Maker: it has been his great and paramount object to live not for this but for a better world; and now he may well rejoice in a death which comes to fulfil the intense desires of his soul. What is death to the Christian? *It is to him the great day of meeting*. It is too often regarded only in its melancholy aspect, as a separation from objects beloved. But the heart deeply imbued with that Divine grace which will make us to regard as our best friends those who bear in their souls most of the image of their maker, will readily pass over the consideration of the few mourners who are left behind only for a short stage of life's journey, and will stretch forth towards that happy and glorious assemblage into whose company death ushers the believer. If even in life the christian by virtue of the sympathy of feeling given him is said *to have come* to the general assembly and church of the first born; how much more impressive is the consideration when this is about to be not figuratively but actually realized; when the servant of God is on the point of joining in person the glorious company of the Redeemer; and as the beautiful language of Scripture expresses the thought, to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of his Father—nay, when he will see his Saviour face to face, and will be permitted to behold the glory of that Divine and exalted Being, that Blessed Christ, who then, in the character of man as well as God, will dwell in the midst of his people!

That beloved and highly esteemed individual, whose lamented though precious death, has suggested these thoughts was herself a striking example of the truth of most of the preceding observations.

Some fourteen or eighteen years ago it pleased God to bring her to the knowledge of the truth. What particular means may, in the first instance, have been employed for this end, I am not aware. We know, however, that her religious feelings were for some years cultivated and matured by the preaching which she then attended in the principal parochial church in this town. Having subsequently united with this church, on a sincere conviction of duty, her religious life became to us an object of closer attention. In offering a few remarks on a character which, we cannot but feel, was more than commonly excellent, I trust that this congregation will acquit me of any undue desire of lauding human nature or of misrepresenting or concealing its infirmities, I can confidently appeal to many here that such has never been my practice. We speak of our departed sister in no other light than one who approaching Christ as a sinner, guilty and condemned, received mercy and forgiveness through his name; and who from the same source, deriving that strength which enabled her afterwards, to live so exemplary a life, rendered thus to her Saviour all the praise.

The first characteristic which I would notice in these brief remarks is *the attachment of the subject of this sketch to those distinguishing and prominent doctrines of the Gospel, which on account of their essential importance in the system of Redemption have been denominated Evangelical.* Our departed friend firmly believed in the corruption, the total depravity of the human heart by nature, as respects any relish for holiness, or any spirit of sincere obedience to God—and in the renovation of this nature by the Holy Spirit, through faith in the atonement of Christ. These truths she regarded as being of the essence of the Gospel; as the root of that divine change, that opposition to

worldliness and vanity, which uniformly marks the sincere believer : and she believed them not as one who had borrowed her sentiments from others, but who drew them from the well spring of life—the Divine oracles themselves—and in whom the instruction of the Holy Ghost was confirmed by the experience he gave her of these things in her own heart and life.

In connection with this let me notice *her zeal for the cause of God*—the advance of the Gospel of Christ. If there was any thing she lived for, it was this. The truths she believed were in her the power of God. Knowing them to be Divine, she ardently longed for the spread of their influence. It was impossible to converse with her, without discovering at once that this was uppermost in her mind. None rejoiced more than she, when sinners were converted to God, and professed Christians walked so as to adorn their profession. None more truly grieved at the reverse. If at any time, "Zion was made to mourn," from any cause, and especially, if she was "wounded in the house of her friends," the heart of our deceased sister sorrowed sincerely and deeply. To few could the language of the Psalmist be more appropriate. "If I forget thee, oh ! Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning : if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

Our departed friend was remarkable too for *her tender concern for the souls of others*. She bore them continually on her heart. This was manifested by her unvarying endeavour to win sinners to Christ ; her frequent, but mild and kind, expostulations ; her faithfulness, together with her Christian gentleness in reproof. She pleaded with them, and prayed for them. Often, we doubt not, was her knee bowed to God on their behalf ; and there are not a few in this assembly, we are assured, who, did propriety permit, might now rise and give thrilling testimony to the frequency, the urgency, the faithfulness and the affection of her christian admonitions.

But we must not omit to notice, also, *the strict conscientiousness* by which our departed sister was distinguished. She was in the habit of referring every thing to the heavenly standard. She was deeply imbued with the word of God : acknowledging it to be designed for the guidance and recovery of the lost, she testified the sincerity of her convictions by habitually seeking its instruction. No one could be long in her presence without feeling the truth of these remarks—the spirit of the sacred volume breathed in her whole deportment.

But there is no part of her whole exemplary character on which one might not dwell with satisfaction, and with a conviction that those who knew her would amply bear us out in our remarks : I must close however, with noticing one other striking feature of our friend's character. Amidst the many christian graces that adorned her, none perhaps were so prominent as *her habitual steadiness and consistency*. This habit of her mind indicated beyond a doubt, that she felt the truth presented in our text—she realized the importance—nay, the preciousness of death. This prominent habit of mind preserved her from being driven about with every wind of doctrine, and it proved a sort of ballast in the soul, which supported her in various trying changes, through which she was called to pass. In prosperity or adversity, the deportment of our departed sister* was invariably the same : at all times she appeared as one relying on that hope which is as “an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.”

But having thus engaged your attention in a brief notice of the life of our beloved sister, I must not omit to say a few words on her peaceful happy death—a death that so beautifully and in so striking a manner illustrated the text and our previous remarks upon it. There are, however, a few circumstances that preceded it, at which I may be permitted rapidly to glance, as marking the goodness of God in mingling mercy in her cup of sorrow.

The members of this church, and especially those who were more particularly united to our departed friend, could not but

feel that to be a trying Providence which separated their dear and highly esteemed sister, from the bosom of those she loved and cheered by her presence, to wane in sickness, and yield up her spirit, in a foreign land. Many are those who would have felt it a holy privilege to have conducted this dear friend to the verge of life, and to have been blest with a sight of that calm composure, that heavenly joy, with which she forsook her tenement of clay. But when this was denied—there were not wanted those who esteemed themselves happy to be acquainted with so bright an example of Christian faith. “You conferred on me a great favour” writes a beloved and highly esteemed brother in the ministry* “in procuring me the acquaintance of the sister in Christ whom your letter introduced. Although from the remoteness of her residence, being two miles from my own, and on the opposite side of the East River, I could not visit her as frequently as I wished, I saw that she had made high attainments in the divine life, *had* made, I say, for those she is now making are of a far higher order.”

But it is peculiarly grateful to us to remember, that while our beloved sister was so circumstanced, that she could not receive all the attention from Christians of her own communion, which they desired to give, it pleased God to prepare for her a frequent visitor in a pious and exemplary Episcopalian minister,† the pastor of the church in the place of her residence, and towards whom, having intimately known him many years before, she would at once feel all the confidence of friendship. He proved to be one of those good and open hearted christians, who rising superior to the prejudices of party, can rejoice equally in all who give proof of possessing the mind that was in Christ Jesus. With this beloved friend our sister enjoyed sweet communion and by his pious conversation was doubtless much comforted and cheered.

* Rev. W. R. Williams, pastor of the Amity street Baptist Church, New York. †Dr. Cutler of Brooklyn.

But the period of her departure was at hand, and she was shortly to be removed beyond the reach or the need of human comforters. It was natural, dear brethren, for us to anticipate that a life so steadily consistent, so exemplary and so christian, would end in peace; and in this instance we were not disappointed. In the correspondence from which we have derived information of her decease, are some striking proofs of this. The minister whom we have mentioned as a frequent visitor in her sickness writes as follows, "The night before she died, I was with her, and among other things which I remember was this remarkable sentence, 'I expected to be *supported* by my Saviour when I came to this hour—but I have been *comforted*—*It is lovely to die.*'" A near relative writes, "Our dear Eliza had no fears of death whatever, but seemed to wish to be gone, she expressed herself the day before she died as being quite ready for her departure, and said, as she looked at her Saviour she could see him smile upon her as if to welcome her home." My own respected correspondent says, "She said to me at my last visit that she was almost at times tempted to question the genuineness of her peace—it was so perfect and unbroken."

Thus peacefully and sweetly died one whose whole pure and peaceful christian life prepared those who knew her to anticipate for her no other death than this. She realized most perfectly the doctrine of our text, "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." If I seem, my hearers, to have said too much on the subject of her exemplary character, I must again assure you, I should not have ventured to do so, but that I am persuaded that the general conviction entertained of the christian excellence of which I have spoken demanded and would amply sustain all I have now said. With regard to her I cannot myself but adopt the language of another beloved and early friend of the deceased, "never did I feel such unbounded assurance of the final happiness of any human being." We are, at the same time, far from desiring to represent our departed sister as a perfect character: we suppose that in the midst of many excellencies, she had her faults. Whatever they may have

been, however, we believe they were such as were better known to herself than to others. The prominent features of her character we firmly believe to have been in no degree inferior to the picture we have attempted to draw.

It only remains that we should endeavour to gather for our own profit the important instruction offered by our subject, and the striking illustration of it exhibited in the life and death of the deceased. Let, then, what has been now said have its proper application to all who are present.

Beloved Christian brethren, and especially you who were members of this church together with our departed sister! we are called upon in a peculiarly affecting manner to remember the deceased. We must mourn for her, for we loved her; but let us not mourn selfishly, nor as those who are without hope: she is gone to glory and to God: she finished her course; she kept the faith; and has received the immortal crown. We may mourn for her, for we have lost the benefit of her prayers amongst us and for us—a loss of no small value. My esteemed correspondent, already alluded to, felt this. “In the removal” says he of this beloved sister, “your church, my dear sir, has lost, possibly, one of the most devout and assiduous of its earthly intercessors.” It certainly is so; but while we lose the benefit of her prayers, let us not forget that we have still the holy memory of her blessed example. Let us so cherish the recollection of all that was praiseworthy in our dear departed sister, that, in the spirit of the scriptures, it may instigate us, as possessing a distinguished, and to us peculiarly touching place in that “cloud of witnesses” which the apostle represents as surrounding the arena of the christian struggle, and encouraging those who are still running the race they have finished.

But, there are, surely, others present to whom, though not members of this church, perhaps not professors of a christian hope, our beloved sister's departure is a forcible lesson—a beseeching entreaty. You have lost, my dear friends, much that was a

high privilege to you in the life of this dear and earnest follower of Christ: you have not now her prayers, and her warnings; but you have her DEATH; and does it not plead with you? Oh, when you think of her earnest entreaties; her solemn admonitions; the times when, perhaps, you may have bowed the knee together before the throne of mercy; does it not add a thrilling energy to these recollections, that that tongue is now silent in death? Is not that very silence more eloquent, and more powerful than her voice itself? And when in your more still and retired moments you shall remember those passages of your acquaintance with Eliza Tremain in which your hearts acknowledged the truth and the pathos of her christian counsel, shall not the solemn silence of her death present her as still pleading with you in a tone of earnestness and power exceeding even the persuasiveness of her living voice.

Let then that voice prevail with you; it echoed when living the voice of her Saviour; it still prolongs the same admonition; she, being dead, yet speaketh. In her righteous example she shewed you how to familiarize your minds with death so as to regard it as a friend: in her peaceful happy death, she has confirmed the blessed truth of our text, and has shown you how death may be precious indeed. She, in her life, had learned to open the door of her heart to Christ; and now, both by her life and death she strengthens and enforces the declaration of her Saviour, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come into him and sup with him and he with me." Our beloved departed friend still bids you to forsake all worldly vanities and give yourselves to Christ.

[No apology is needed for the addition by way of appendix of the following Extracts from the Letter of a friend.]

"November 30, 1836.—Mrs. C. was all last night at the bedside of the amiable sufferer Miss Tremain; she is on the border of the grave and not expected to survive, but from one day to another; she suffers much more than is usual in consumption, but is patience itself; she enjoys a most enviable christian serenity, assurance and resignation, and but waits the expected moment, that shall change suffering humanity into blissful spirituality. She is a bright and lovely evidence of the truths of Christianity. The most prosperous of this world's favorites and votaries may well envy Miss Tremain, for she under all her suffering is a favourite of Heaven and very near her eternal home. She has been visited repeatedly, by the Clergy and the pious in her neighbourhood."

* * * * *

"December 5.—On Friday last our dear friend Miss Eliza Tremain exchanged her probation of extreme suffering, for the blissful abode of redeemed spirits, affording to the last moment the encouraging and convincing evidences of the precious truths of our most holy religion. Her's was indeed, the death bed of the righteous, and her last moments were sweet hope, and the triumph of faith amidst great bodily anguish. Unquestionably she has triumphed over fallen humanity and is now enjoying all the scripture promises."

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The Corpse was attended to the grave yesterday by Mr. Howard, a Baptist Minister in Brooklyn, and Dr. Cutler of St. Ann's Church, (Episcopalian) the latter is highly esteemed as an evangelical man, he has the best church in Brooklyn and frequently visited Miss Tremain with his wife. Mr. Howard had prayers at the House, and Dr. Cutler service at the grave, the latter was about 5 P. M. in the twilight, and most peculiarly impressive and solemn, a great crowd collected around. Dr. Cutler's sisters were school mates of Miss Tremain formerly in Boston; and she received much assistance and consolation from his pious conversation during her illness. Mr. Howard and Dr. Cutler are on very intimate terms and no prejudice exists between them, it was at his suggestion I invited Dr. Cutler to attend and perform the service at the grave, and all was done decently and in order, and appeared to give universal satisfaction."